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THE

AGE OF GENIUS!

A

SATIRE ON THE TIMES.

IN A

POETICAL EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

BY THOMAS BUSBY.

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C

P R E F A C E.

I Am not unaware that some of the sentiments in the following Pages will prove discordant to prevailing opinions; but as every author does, or is *supposed* to, deliver his *own thoughts*, these are presented under *that* title. If the Poem possesses merit, that merit will be its *own index* with *real* judges, and survive all the attacks of false criticism: if, on the contrary, it should be found destitute, instead of transmitting its author's name to *posterity*, it will as certainly sink into *oblivion*; a circumstance which every *unsuccessful* writer, not as void of understanding as of literary talents, will deem the *more tolerable fate*.

THE
AGE OF GENIUS!

AN
EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

YOU, my *dear friend*, whom art and talents grace,
Which only to your *principles* yield place;
Who by your *own* know genius' *real* flame,
And, in your *own*, enjoy a *well-earn'd* fame;
You, list'ning to my *temporary* song, 5
Shall judge, and tell me if I'm *right* or *wrong*.

WHEN our *grave* grandfathers talk of those *rare* times,
Ere *modern* follies sprung, or *modern* crimes;

B

When

When all were *chastely* honest, *greatly* good ;
 Untempted, or temptation still withstood ; 10
 When patriotism in *patriots* found support,
 And Virtue at St. James's kept her *court* ;
 When nought but for the *public good* was done ;
 Ere kings believ'd the *many* made for *one* ;
 When viewing in their King the common weal, 15
 The *many* felt for *one* a loyal zeal ;
 When ev'ry heart beat *Amor Patriæ*,
 And Britain's *strength* was Britain's *liberty* ;
 Ere *lower* ranks were mingled with the *higher*,
 Or trade to dissipation *dar'd* aspire ; 20
 Ere linsey-woolsey gowns were thrown aside,
 To deck, in lace and lustring, *female pride* ;
 Ere *old* men wore their *hair*, when *young* ones *wigs* ;
 Ere *cits* kept country boxes, and their *gigs* ;
 When lords and ladies *honour'd* their degree, 25
 All *things* and *men*, what *men* and *things* should be :
 When you hear *this* ; when also you reflect,
 All times, in turn, partake the *same* respect ;

That

That just like living poets, *present days*,
 Whate'er their *merit*, know no *present praise*; 30
 That, past and gone, like works of authors dead,
 Times are extoll'd whose *worthies* wanted *bread*:
 When you reflect on *this*, tho' *griev'd* the while,
 The *folly* cannot chuse but make you *smile*!

BUT yet, again, (distinction's line to draw) 35
 Tho' *dotage* thus to preach, we know no law
 Binds us to think *past* times *few* virtues had,
 Or, *having* few, that *these* are not as *bad*.
Some faults, *some* foibles, certainly *we* have;
Some fools, *some* coxcombs—*here* and *there*, a knave. 40
 Some *few* erroneous notions *now* prevail:
These let us weigh, my friend, in Reason's scale.

THE times *have* been when *genius* was so *rare*,
 The learn'd would *rev'rence*, and the ign'rant *stare*,
 If beaming from above the blessing fell, 45
 And bade some fav'rite happily excel:

The man with virtue and true genius fir'd,
 Was prais'd by *all*, and by the wise *admir'd* ;
 Beholding in the gift it's SACRED SOURCE,
 All honour'd, cherish'd, and confess'd it's force : 50
 From heav'n alone it came, and came to few,
 Nor from the sterile root of *labour* grew.
 Of genius *now* (blest age!) the *diff'rent* lot!
 All *think* they have it—nay, who has it *not* ?
 In *courts* it shines, in *senates*, and the *schools*, 55
 And *clears* the world of *dunces* and of *fools* !
 Spreads, flourishes, and favours unconfin'd ;
 One *common* benefit to *all mankind* !
 In *this* opinion young and *old* abide,
 What genius *is*, is all they can't *decide*. 60
 Some, at the most, a *knack* conceive it all ;
 Or well to *write*, or well to *catch a ball*,
 An *equal* object of their *admiration*,
 As *sure* a title to their *approbation* :
These undertake to prove it only *toil*, 65
 Denying all *diversity* of *foil* ;

Nature, with *them*, has no distinction made,
 And fruit *must* follow Application's spade:
 While others, (and by much the *greater part*)
 Tho' they allow it not *depends* on art, 70
 By labour *still* aver it may be gain'd;
 Or something *very similar* attain'd.
 Hence, of *all* maxims, which more trite than *this*—
 ' Study the more, if Nature is remiss?'
 Guided by *this*, the million's led away; 75
 Guided by *this*, hear what the million say!—

' ART thou not blest with Genius *labour free*?
 ' By *labour* then, at least, a Genius be;
 ' *Practice makes perfect*—Nature *still* is kind,
 ' If to her offers we're not *idly* blind. 80
 ' Nature is *coy* but to be su'd with *Art*;
 ' Then be it *thine* to act the suitor's part.
 ' Still as she *frowns*, more ardent court her *smile*,
 ' And seek her *favours* at the hand of *Toil*.

‘ Has she with *sparing* hand supplied thy *cup*? 85

‘ Pour in from *Learning’s*, then, and *fill it up* :

‘ The more thou add’st to what was giv’n before,

‘ Be sure in future, she will give the more ;

‘ In shape of *Genius* will her blessings show’r ;

‘ Shew what in *her’s* and what in *Learning’s* pow’r ; 90

‘ Prove that to Knowledge Wit is still allied,

‘ That *Labour’s* suit is never *long* denied,

‘ That learning *all* deficiencies supplies,

‘ And teaches e’en the *weakest* to be *wise*.

‘ Then *labour*—thus thou *full* amends shalt make 95

‘ For *natural* defects.’ O gross mistake !

From toil, I grant, some aid we may expect,

But ne’er shall conquer *natural* defect.

Strive as we *may*, endeavour all we *can*

To counter-act, and vary *Nature’s* plan, 100

Still, spite of *all*, she keeps her *sov’ reign* way,

Nor yields to *Art* the honour of her *sway*.

Nature to Art gave *birth*—and say, shall *she*

The *slave* commence of whom she caus’d to be ?

'Gainst her *own wisdom* shall she prove a *tool*, 105

And mar her *purpose* to indulge a *fool*?

The bulk of Life's affairs ask no *great* parts,

And *little* or of *sciences* or *arts* :

Labour, mere *labour*, is the grand demand ;

Some things the *head* must do, but more the *hand*. 110

The *bluntest* tenement Content enjoys,

In *raising*, many labourers employs ;

While *amplest* piles Ambition can erect,

Ask in *designing* but *one* architect.

'CAUSE most are shallow, say we *Nature* fails? 120

Her *wisdom*, rather say, as *much* prevails

Where her stream oozes thro' the *narrowest* souls,

As where in *fullest* tides her bounty rolls.

'Tis not she *sinks*, because she lifts not *all* ;

She *seems* indeed, but *only* seems, to fall : 125

To *one*, *great* end diversifies creation,

Supports and governs by *subordination* ;

Here

Here high, there low ; now calm, and now a storm ;

Various in *means*, in *purpose* uniform :

Each rule of Nature's an *unerring* rule ;

130

And when she *makes*, she always *means* a fool.

WHAT if each age ten thousand *Pitts* produce,

And gives no *R*———s for common use ?

Some *two* or *three* can chaunt the Cockpit note,

But Government *three hundred* wants to vote :

135

What's a whole Cabinet, tho' e'er so *wise*,

Devoid of *P*———s for *timely lyes* ?

IN this great town, (region of *worldly* cares !)

What *thousands* thrive by only vending wares !

While *many* a son of Genius, and of Science,

140

In *richest* merit finds a *poor* reliance !

See thro' the world the observation hold—

The way of *dulness* is the way of *gold*.

The reason's plain—all—craftsmen, 'squires, and kings—

Need more of *common* than *ingenious* things.

145

A poem

A poem, song, or picture, *now and then*,
 May strike the *fancied taste* of *dullest* men :
 But *vulgar* lux'ries come in *constant* play ;
Dress and good-living triumph *ev'ry* day.

SINCE then, of life's conveniencies, the *sum* 150
 Must from *mere industry*, not *Genius*, come,
 Dame Nature, in her *wisdom*, has thought fit,
 To give to most a *plenteous lack of wit* ;
 To stint them to their necessary light,
 Keep to it's *proper bound* their *mental* fight, 155
 That, only seeing their own *narrow course*,
 (As blinkers help to guide the packer's horse)
 They may not to *eccentric objects* stray,
 But keep the *beaten tenor* of their way.

DID Genius fall the lot of *ev'ry one*, 160
 How wou'd the bus'ness of the world be done ?
 If *all* were wits, who'd wreath the poet's bays ?
Originals, who furbish up *old plays* ?

What H——ts pillage for us *Gallic scenes* ?
 And what become of all our *Magazines* ? 165
 All *first-rate artists*, who'd supply the town
 With *striking likenesses* at *Half-a-crown* ?
 Our dramatists, all Sheridans and Colmans,
 Our players, Kings and Kembles, Popes and Holmans ;
 Who shou'd enrich the stage with *Fontainbleaus* ? 170
 What D——s speak so *well* with *half a nose* ?
 Or if, in *music*, Genius favour'd all,
 Who set the *yearly jingle* of Vauxhall ?
 To hotch-potch *poetry*, give *airs* hotch-potch,
 Coin *English* jargon, and baptize it *Scotch* ? 175
New set this month, it's fond composer's pride ;
 By the cloy'd public, *next* month, *set aside*.
 All Stanleys, Arnolds, Battishills, and Cooks,
 What shou'd we do for H——ns, and for H——ks ?
 Could all *compose*, what D——ys shou'd *compile* ? 180
 What D——es do *great things*, in a *little stile* ;
 Display their *tiny* parts in *alterations*,
New set old tunes, and spin out *variations* ?

All parsons, *learned bishops*, who wou'd preach?
 All *qualified*, who *condescend* to teach? 185
 If all *great lawyers*, lifted to the bar,
 What *lesser rogues* shou'd bid their neighbours jar?
 Into their minds the *legal frenzy* pour;
 Or, found fomented, still foment the more?
 All at the top, the top who shall support? 190
 Who drive the sheep up to the *fleeing* court?
 If all *physicians*, who's to *mix* the drug?
 What the grave face, *wise wig*, well-practis'd shrug,
 If still no *'pothecary* adds *his* part,
 T'enforce the *recipe*, and reach the *heart*? 195
 Say, what the use of *surest precepts* giv'n,
 If still in *vain* the patient sighs—for *heav'n*?

EACH has his *part* in what his talents *suit*;
 This shou'd *design*, and *that* but *execute* :
 This fort the seed, by *those* the earth be till'd ; 200
 That give the plan, and *these* the structure build.

EACH of *one chain* is but a *diff'rent link*,
 Whether his task to execute, or *think* :
 Each in his office bears some *useful part* ;
 And *toil's* as indispenfable as *art*. 205
 Pity all fee not Nature's *plain design* ;
 Not keep their ftation in the *mental line* :
 By lefs'ning links the varying chain is bound,
 In *mazy turnings* winds and winds around ;
 Hence, *meeting*, leaft with greateft *will* compare, 210
 Nor know how *many circles off* they are.
 By force of application *all* will draw
 Bleffings from Nature againft Nature's *law* ;
 Still *toil* and *tease*, as, by downright affault,
 They'd *make* her *mend*, by *punifhing* her fault : 215
 But *thus* attack'd, fhe *fortifies* her rules,
 And fools, *ftill plodding*, grow the *duller* fools.

E'EN Pope, who *modestly* imputes to *care*,
 The *charms* that in his verfe fhine *ev'ry where*,

Proves

Proves, in his very *compliment* to toil, 220
Such flow'rs cou'd only spring in *such a soil*.

O HAPPY Bard! Ah, how much *happier yet*,
 Had but *due shades* oppos'd the *lights* of wit!
 Hadst thou for *thine* the plan of *Nature* chose,
 And shewn the *nettle* to commend the *rose*! 225
 Just giv'n the *sample* to the *rule* you drew,
 And been contented not to *over-do*!

WHY by redundant toil are *plain things* forc'd,
 And from their *own simplicity* divorc'd?
 Whether the subject, reptiles, gods, or men, 230
 Why *all things* blazon where you turn your pen?
 To the *first lustre* see *all* parts aspire,
 And own e'en *beauty*, *unreliev'd*, may tire.

THINK a whole year beams out *one scene of flow'rs*,
 Warm suns, soft airs, and amaranthine bow'rs; 235

And say, if flow'rs, if sunshine, and soft airs,
 And *all* the charms the *loveliest season* wears,
 Can yield the transport of *returning spring*,
 Shaking *new* fragrance from *fresh-scented* wing,
 When Earth, reliev'd from storms and freezing skies, 240
 Feels from her womb a *new creation* rise ;
 When Summer follows with *maturing* fun,
 And takes of Spring the *task* she had *begun* ;
 When Autumn's pencil, *varying* still the scene,
 Ripens the fruit, re-paints the *changing green* ; 245
 When Winter, with a *rougher, bolder* hand,
 Heaves the swell'd flood, or *whitens o'er* the land :
 When *these* in Nature's *sapient* order roll ;
 Oppos'd, tho' *join'd* ; tho' *sev'ral*, *one great whole* !
 Strike the *charm'd eye*, and teach th' *enraptur'd heart*, 250
 To feel what *circling seasons* can impart !

GREAT DRYDEN view ! see Art not *rule*, but *aid* ;
 The *objects* Nature's, Art's the *light and shade* :

See them in *due subordination* join ;
 As that *strikes out*, this *perfect* the design. 255
 Still as each thought supplies the *various* rhyme,
 Th' *according* stile it's nature fuits, and clime.
 If it demand a *bright* and *burning sun*,
 Their blazing course the *vivid numbers* run :
 Would this but *dazzle*? Should less force inspire? 260
Less glowing language sheds it milder fire:
 Would it in cooler shade *more grace* receive?
 A soft recess the *faint expressions* give :
 Does it, *quite plain*, a *lowly station* ask?
 The *homely line* performs it's *humble task* : 265
 Would it more nat'ral in the *medium* flow?
 The verse *accommodates*; nor *high*, nor *low* :
 While, *noble*! it in *higher sphere* wou'd shine,
 He elevates it in a *stile divine* !
 See *Nature's* pencil, in the hand of *Art*,
Nature's own spirit to the work impart,
 And the *bold figures, living*! from the canvas *start*! } 270

See Learning's *body* kindled all to *soul* !
 See the bright flame of *Genius* wrap the *whole* !
 And say, had *Nature* this *great soul* denied, 275
 If *Toil* the *inspiration* had supplied ?

Most minds, by *Nature* bound to *such a line*,
 Only within *that sphere* can ever shine :
 Nay, even *there*, peep out in rays *so small*,
 We cannot, *fairly*, say they shine at all. 280
 Some, like the *Sun*, *whole worlds* are form'd to light ;
 Shine *ev'ry where*, and *ev'ry where* are *bright* :
 Others, if o'er their *boundaries* they rove,
 Sink, and extinguishing, *mere meteors* prove.
 For a short space *some* roll their *transient* fire, 285
 Just kindle to a *flash*, and then—*expire* !
 Some a *long course* in *Nature's medium* shine,
 Nor yet to *deaden*, nor to *blaze*, incline.
 These, *independent*, in *themselves* are bright ;
 Those form'd but to reflect *another's* light : 290
 Some,

Some, like fierce comets, *rapid* move, and *far* ;
 Like them, again, returning *regular* ;
 Relume their fire at *Relaxation's* fun,
 And then again as *wide a circuit* run,

WHEN we a spark wou'd rouze to *active flame*, 295
 We only need to *fan* and *feed* the fame :
 Once rais'd, the more we heap the kindling pyre,
 Sparks *thicker* rise, and *fiercer* flames aspire ;
 Catch at each part, their growing vigour raise,
 And spread, and burst into an *universal blaze* ! 300
 Not so the *mind*—A *spark* found only *there*,
 We *less* must heap, and with a *nicer* care :
 The *mental* spark but such a pile will light,
 Bear but *such chafing*, and but burn *so bright*.
 The fuel *duly measur'd* to it's pow'r, 305
 If *faintly glimm'ring*, may exist it's *hour* ;
 Illumine all it's *little pyre* around,
 And, by it's *own*, shew *kindred sparks* their bound.

But if, *ambitious*, it wou'd *spread*, (Behold !
 Behold the fate of *little sparks* too bold !)
Stifled by what it *vainly* strives to light,
 It's rashness brings it's own *eternal night*. 310

Good Doctor Dormant, whom in youth we knew,
 Had some *small spirit*, some *small Genius* too ;
 And with *proportion'd learning* promis'd fair, 315
 To do *some credit* to the past'ral care :
 Nay, pow'rs beyond *most parsons* might have reach'd,
 And kept *awake* his audience while he *preach'd* ;
 Or, (greater latitude of praise to take)
 Had preach'd as tho' he were *himself awake* : 320
 But, lo ! with erudition *overcharg'd*,
 And nothing but his *waist* and *wig* enlarg'd,
 With *letter'd lumber*, heap'd and heap'd about,
 Self-knowledge *quench'd*, knowledge of men *shut out* :
 Nay, *Learning's self*, press'd down by it's own weight 325
 Too close to kindle, or irradiate,

The spark that in *due time* had *somewhat* shone,
 Instead of *brighter*, quite *obscure* is grown ;
 And for some judgment, spirit, and ideas,
 Only a huge, *dead stock* of words appears.

330

AND now I hear some *pedants* say—‘ What, then,
 ‘ Is *Genius* all that’s to distinguish men ?
 ‘ Shall Wit o’er *Learning* dare to mount his feat ?
 ‘ *Illit’rate Wit* the *sacred Sisters* greet ?’

No—Genius e’er so *great*, I still confess,

335

Can never know, *alone*, it’s happiness :

As flames unfed, must transiently expire,

So without *learning* must the *mental fire* :

Nay, as more bright, more general the flame,

More fuel must supply and feed the same ;

340

E’en so the *mind* the *wider* it expands,

More knowledge for it’s *maintenance* demands.

GENIUS and Learning, in *each other* blest,
 In him a *manly* strength, in her confess’d

That

That *pliant Modesty* which heightens beauty, 345
 And adds to charms of *frame*, the grace of *duty* ;
 Which points, yet *delicately* points, the way ;
 So rules, by *yielding* she preserves her fway ;
 While Genius triumphs with a *gen'rous* pride,
 And, while he's *guided*, seems to *lead* his guide— 350
 Learning with Wit, thus *happily* combin'd,
 Will, *must*, yield models of the *noblest* kind ;
 The parents by their *progeny* be known ;
 Their *blended* qualities *exalted* shewn :
 Learning by *Wit* inspir'd, to Wit gives *aid*, 355
 While Wisdom, *smiling*, owns the league she made.

WHERE is the man who learning wou'd *explode* ?
 We only reason 'gainst the *gen'ral mode* ;
 The dealing it to *geniuses* and *fools*,
 By *equal* portions, and *unvaried rules*. 360

It's *present* influence, let us then survey ;
 See who it *aids*, and who it *leads astray* ;

How

How oft but fills the gap of youthful years,
 And then for *trade*, or *pleasure*, disappears :
 Yet how more frequent holds up *human pride*, 365
 And *follies*, nature, *unprovok'd*, wou'd *hide*.
 Among the sons of *Lit'rature*, how *few*
 Up to the *fountain-head* the stream pursue !
 Or, to the fountain-head *purfuing*, yet
 How *fewer* taste the *fenfe*, or feel the *wit* ! 370
 How *many* with the *dregs* become unfound ?
 (For where the fpring fo *clear* but dregs are found ?
Where dregs, my friend, *more* plenteous found than here,
 Tho' drawn by *you*, no fpring is found fo *clear*)
 How *many*, with their *learning*, *error* drink, 375
 And make the brink of *knowledge*, *folly's* brink ;
 At *ev'ry draught* fome wholefome thought *repreffs*,
 And only fuck in *pride* and *idleneffs* !

SOME are to barbarifm fo *strong* inclin'd
 By *nature*, they can *never* be refin'd ; 380

Or arts, or letters, teach them *what you will*,
 You only give to vice *new pow'rs and skill* :
 Bound or to *frailty's*, or to *folly's* side,
 Or *vice*, or *folly*, still their conduct guide ;
 While each accomplishment bestows the art, 385
Abler to play the *fop's* or *villain's* part.
 With *some small parts*, but more of *vulgar pride*,
 (The *common basis* of each fault beside)
 They *not without success* to study bend,
 (If *that's* success which serves not *Virtue's* end). 390
New vices, with each *new acquirement*, shew ;
 Or as in *knowledge*, so in *pertness* grow ;
 Bid *Confidence* break down each *decent* fence,
 And *Learning* hold the torch to *Insolence*.
 For *learning* heav'n cou'd never *these* design, 395
 Since *worse* than vain, our efforts to *refine*.
 Their *native*, gross deformity of soul,
 (As *subterraneous* vapours *harmless* roll)
 Beneath the veil of *ignorance* might lie
Unnotic'd, nor offend th' *escaping* eye. 400

But

But, meant by *erudition* to be grac'd,
 And in the light of *lit'rature misplac'd*,
 Each fault's not only brought to *public view*,
 But what *exposes magnifies* it too.

So when gross matter in the *earth* is pent, 405
 Th' *exhaling* beams of Phœbus give it vent ;
 Draw it from *darkness* to the *open day*,
 (From where, *confin'd*, it *inoffensive* lay)
 And as it issues from the teeming earth,
 Not merely give the sulphur second birth, 410
 But as it, fuming, hovers o'er the ground,
Spread it, by rarefaction, *all around*.

SOME boys, at *most*, seem *only* sent to school,
 To compliment the *universal rule* ;
Just thro' a *certain course* of study run, 415
Just to return to where they *first begun* :
 Acquire a *little* with a *deal of pain*,
 For bus'ness to *resign* it all again :

Just

Just as their *sisters*, in their *maiden lives*,
 Learn *music*—to forget it when they're *wives*. 420

BEHOLD them, tolerable scholars made,
 Throw by their *books* to make a way for *trade* :
 At *certain age*, see them of *course* begin
 To *let out* learning, to let commerce *in* :
 Till from *all* lit'rature's attractions wean'd, 425
 And losing e'en the *little* they had glean'd,
 In spite of *all* their Greek, and all the *praise*
 Acquir'd by *misconstruing* Latin plays,
 They turn out just as wise, and just as bright,
 As those who've only learn'd to *read* and *write*. 430

AGAT the goldsmith, when he first left school,
 Could translate *Virgil*, and was *no small fool* :
 Nay, was so good a *Grecian*, that, 'tis said,
 Homer with *decent fluency* he read.
 But now with *other things* that *head* is fill'd, 435
 Than who stole *Helen*, or who *Hector* kill'd ;

The *narrow* cell but for *one* tenant made,
 Could not contain both *lit'rature* and *trade*.
 Trade's *skilful* hand soon therefore op'd a *door*
 For Learning's *quickly-disappearing* store; 440
 Drew from his head what knowledge it might hold,
New furnish'd, and *trepann'd*, the skull with *gold*.
 Now *Traffic* holds the seat where *Learning* fate,
 And now a *diamond* *casket* is that *pate*:
 Where Homer shot but an *ideal* blaze, 445
 Now *real* brilliants dart *congenial* rays:
 Where gold in *golden* *verse* cou'd only *flow*,
 There *sterling* *gold* supplies it's *solid* glow:
 No *more* a place there *Greece* or *Troy* maintain,
 No longer *burden* his now *alter'd* brain; 450
 If *any* *Troy*, *Troy-weight* now bears the sway;
 And *Greece*, that *conquer'd* *Troy*, to *gold* gives way.

THESE a *small* *few*!—The *greater*, *wiser* part,
 Display their *talents* in a *bolder* start!

To *brighter* objects than *dull commerce* turn ; 455
 For *nobler* wreaths than *Cræsus*' dare to burn !
 Retain their learning, and, before, forget
 Their *bus'ness*, lest the *world* forget their *wit* :
 'Mongst *Guildhall's* patriots, or *Coachmaker's* smarts,
 Unwind their *learning*, and display their *parts*. 460
 No matter whether trade goes ill or well ;
 Enough for them, that they in *prate* excel !
 And, strange to say ! no few of modern failures
 Originate at *Paul's*, or *Merchant-Taylor's*.

CITS, *scholars* now and *rhetoricians* grown, 465
 Claim more than *ancient titles* for their own.
 Once, all their care to be well *soak'd* and *fed* ;
 The *belly fill'd*, still *empty* went the *head* :
Careless of praise at council each took part ;
 Nor got, the day before, his speech by *heart*. 470
 Cool, if not *rational*, he *spoke his say* ;
 And *equal orators* bore *equal sway*.

No thirst of letter'd reputation yet
 Had e'en begot th' *idea* of *city-wit* ;
 No brawling knew they loud as at the bar ; 475
 No blows *uncivil* bred a *civil-war* :
 Each talk'd and *doz'd* in turn, and that was all ;
 No *pens* and *ink* yet flew about the *Hall* :
 No neighbour to despoil his neighbour fought,
 But all departed with the *wigs* they brought ; 480
 No heads furcharg'd in *rasb dispute* then mix'd,
 Like *Shrovetide cocks* on leaden bafis fix'd ;
 In *weight of belly* each his ballast found,
 And, *light at top*, erectly kept his ground.

But this *no more* !—We must not now, alack ! 485
 Seek the decorum of a cent'ry back :
 All *learned* now, and consequently *wits*,
 Fall *cureless* into strong-conceited fits ;
 For liberty, and *dear diurnal fame*,
 Rush to debate with more than patriot flame : 490

To

To Council call'd, so furiously engage,
 They scarce at *table* shew a greater rage !

AT *Merchant-Taylor's* bred, Hardwareman cries—
 ‘ Shall we than men of *Paul's* be deem'd less wise ?’
 Or, bred at *Paul's*—‘ Shall we in knowledge yield, 495
 ‘ And give to *Merchant-Taylor's* men the field ?—
 ‘ Here ! where's my gown, lamp, paper, ink, and pen ?
 ‘ Sleep is for *private*, not for *public*, men :
 ‘ To my *dear country* I'll this night devote,
 ‘ To-morrow's speech indite, and get by rote.’ 500
 By his wife question'd why he keeps from bed—
 ‘ *England's salvation*, child, is in my head !
 ‘ How we may rise, her *Genius* whispers still ;
 ‘ But *all* depends upon my care and skill :
 ‘ *Britannia calls !* and I must do her will.’ } 505
 So when poor Crispin, crazy for the praise
 Of *pulpit* eloquence, to preach essays ;
 His 'prentice clerk ; his *cobling-stool* his stage ;
 Flies to the fields with *tabernacle rage !*

With

With Rowland's skill erects the orbs of fight, 510
 Or turns them, *ravish'd!* on the *inward light!*
 Forgets Will's shoulders are but flesh and bone,
 Or thinks at home he's *hammering* on his *stone*;
 Now faith, *all-saving faith*, proclaims aloud!
 Now deals damnation on the trembling crowd! 515
 Ask'd why for *preaching* he deserts his *stall*,
 (Bred at Moorfields, or Tot'nam) hear him bawl,
 ' Because as how I feels I has a *call!*'

SAY *moderns* what they will, we still shall find
 All knowledge but the *vesture* to the mind; 520
 That, howe'er fine the *cloth*, or rich the *lace*,
 No *blockhead's wear* will ever give it *grace*:
 While Genius! e'er so *coarsely* clad, still shews
 A *manner!* and does *credit* to his *cloaths*.
 But as the mob no *nice* distinctions make, 525
 Exterior *glare* for *Quality* mistake,
 While *Quality herself*, in plain array,
 Passes *unnotic'd* thro' the public way;

Since only *Taste* can ever draw the line,
 'Tween where the *trappings*, where the *manners* shine ; 530
 Where from *within*, no rays the *Graces* shoot,
 Where *Elegance* but asks a *better suit*,
 So few discern th' *insuperable* fence,
 'Tween *only ignorance* and—*want of sense*.
 Who're deeply *learned*, *must* be deeply *wise*, 535
 Wisdom in *theory*, not *præctice*, lies :
 Who *know* the right, are *wise*, e'en in the *wrong* ;
 Tho' weak their *conduct*, still their *judgment* strong.
 Who *little* know ; that little e'er so well
Employ'd, each *o'er-charg'd* blockhead shall excel 540
 His boldest, *happiest* effort : and by shewing
 The diff'rence between *doing* and but *knowing*,
 Secure the plaudits due to *native merit*,
 And *seize* the palm which *Genius* shou'd inherit.

SOME we *both* know, who, train'd in Folly's walk, 545
 Blunder thro' life, and while they're *stumbling*, talk

Of *rectitude* ; and place all *human reason*
 In words *so join'd*, things done in *such a season* ;
 In knowing right from wrong, tho' all their life
 Is with that knowledge *one continual strife* : 550
 Their *doctrines* tell how easy 'tis to *preach*,
 Their *lives* how hard to *practise* what they *teach*.

' Who *know* the right, can *do* the right at *will* ;
 ' *Knowledge* the pow'r, the virtue and the skill.
 ' Who can *return*, have *privilege* to *stray* ; 555
 ' Nor do they *err* who *know* the better way.
 ' To *know's* the sense—they're *wise* who *wisdom-see*—
 ' To *know* what's right, is in the right to *be* !'

AND is it then enough we *wisdom view* ?
 Is to *distinguish* all we have to do ? 560
 Will merely *separating* wrong from right,
 Teach to *refrain* from that, in this *delight* ?
 Is it enough we *hear* but Reason's voice ?
 No *judgment* necessary to *direct* our *choice* ?

No *grace*, no *sense*, no *talents* wanting still, 565
 To *do*, as well as *understand* her will ?
 Merely the good and ill to *justly paint*,
 Distinguishes the *preacher*, not the *saint* :
 To know *true* wit from *false*, and *only* know it,
 May form the *critic*, but ne'er made a *poet*. 570

WHEN to *confirm* his *virtue* and his *knowledge*,
 His *unspoil'd* son Sir Tradewell sent to *college*,
 And found, at his *return*, his education
 But *pedantry*, and *taste for dissipation*,
 We could not *censors* of his *wit* commence, 575
 'Twas only *ignorance*, not *want of sense*.
 The Knight, old-fashion'd, bred in those *plain days*,
 When *lust of pudding* banish'd *lust of praise* ;
 When *He* was master of the noblest feat,
 Who at a *turtle-feast* the most cou'd *eat* ; 580
 When Dulness held at Guildhall *quiet sway*,
 Or only *rattled* there on *Lord May'r's Day* ;

Ere

Ere honest, *fame-deluded* cits aspired
 To *rhēt'ric*, and by *Woodfall's* praise were fir'd ;
 Ere Nonsense *perk'd* herself in *classic* stays, 585
 And broke the *lace* in *stretching* for the bays :
 The Knight, home-bred, and still without the *polish*
 By which *wise moderns* ancient *rust* abolish ;
 Untaught, untrain'd in *Erudition's* schools,
 Stranger to *colleges*, and *college-rules* ; 590
 Who scarce had heard of *science* or *degree*,
 And knew no rule—except the *Rule of Three*—
 Thinking at *Oxford* Wisdom reign'd alone,
 (For how should *he* know *Dulness* shar'd the throne ?)
 Sent his son there to seek her for his guide, 595
 And fail'd—but fail'd with *reason* on his side.

BUT when his *Lordship*, with more knowledge stor'd
 Than deem'd by *peers* becoming in a *lord* ;
 Knows what is *true nobility*—it's *end*—
 Whence honours *sprung*—on what they *still depend*— 600
 K That

That, Liberty and Virtue it's support,
 No spot yields sweeter incense than a *court* ;
 That *once* uncherish'd by their *sun-like* rays,
 None droop so sudden as the *titled* bays—
 When my Lord, taught in *this*, knows well the right 605
 From wrong, yet errs in *Education's* spite :
 When *such* a lord instructs his rising heir,
 With *high-born* honours, *meanest* stains to wear ;
 To *boast* that height which but a *sound* supports,
Disdain a friendship where *mere merit* courts ; 610
 To bear in mind that he's a *Noble Lord* !
 Born by untitled worth to be *ador'd*
 At *humble distance*—to avoid, not *greet*,
 Nor *see* her, shou'd he meet her in the *street* ;
 But turn his back on her *plebeian* band— 615
 Yet take a *villain gamester* by the *hand* ;
 Be 'bove th' approaches of the *saucy poor*,
 Unless first qualified—as *pimp*, or *whore*—
 Yet on occasion too, stoop *e'er so low*,
 If with the *lordly* view to *make them so*— 620

When

When thus my *lord* instructs his *heir* to run
 The course of *guilt*, ere *manhood's* is begun ;
 To drink, to rake, seduce, and throw the dice,
 With ev'ry *other* fashionable vice ;
 To make his claim to his *estate* more clear, 625
 To all his *follies* makes him too the heir ;
 Acts *wilfully* in Reason's *contradiction* ;
 Not only *errs*, but errs 'gainst *self-conviction* ;
 Nor claims the *want of knowledge* for defence—
 What is it—tell me—but the *want of sense* ? 630

SURVEY the times, you'll find the *dullest* *elves*
 Have still the *best opinion* of themselves :
 Tho' void of understanding, as of *wit*,
 In *blest self-conceit* they're happy *yet* ;
 That succedaneum *all* defects supplies ; 635
 With common sense and *that*, they all are *wise* :
 Nor *only* *wise*—Conceit provides them *wit* ;
 At council aids my *lord*, as well as *cit* :

By Cit, nor Lord, nor Parliament, nor Hall,
Monopoliz'd—but still enjoy'd by *all*. 640
Ev'ry profession feels alike it's aid,
 And *sons of rhet'ric* spring from *sons of trade* :
 All *now* too bright for *Traffic's* occupations,
 Rush from their *own*, and seize the *upper* stations :
 By dint of *confidence*, or dint of *gold*, 645
 Usurp the heights *Ability* should hold :
 While Merit *once dethron'd*, they keep her down ;
 And, howe'er *ill* it fits them, wear the crown.

Tho' long, *long* fled the time since *bold Pretence*
First with his *strong, invulnerable* fence, 650
 Guarded *fond Inclination* 'gainst th' attack
 Of *searching Diffidence*, (still free to rack
 The breast of Genius ; to inflict those *pains*,
 Reserv'd, alas ! for all who're curst with brains ;
 Those *poignant* wounds which *scrup'lous* merit feels, 655
 Which scarce the world's *just commendation* heals ;)

Tho'

Tho' long, *long* gone the day since *Dulness* knew
 (If *e'er* she did) the *pangs* which still accrue
 From *self-critique*—yet never, *sure*, till *now*,
 Did Confidence such *ample field* allow 670
 To Vanity—*Once* in his own *small way*
 To be the first, and bear *mechanic* sway,
 Compass'd the *craftsman's* wish ; nor did he strive
 By any but his *native* pow'rs, to thrive :
 Now Emulation wild, and *past all bound*, 675
 Soars to the *skies*, *disdainful* of the *ground* ;
 While all (for *foreign fame* outrageous grown)
 Would mount on *any* pinions but their *own*.
 The Cooper scans the *planets*, knows their scope,
 Bends *pliant nature* as he bends a *hoop* ; 680
 Gallantly gives to *Venus Saturn's* moons,
 And proves by *gravity* we raise balloons !
 The Carpenter, turn'd architect, *designs* !
 S—y harangues ; Dunces commence Divines !
 Th' Apothecary makes *Castalian* doses ! 685
 And Madan turns Musician, and *composes* !

As some *peculiar* whim each coxcomb draws
 Aside, so diff'rent *accidents* the *cause* :
Unconscious, these at first are led astray ;
Those, of *themselves* ambitious, start away ! 690
 Some later catch this *fever* of *conceit*,
 Others in *infancy* imbibe it's *heat*.

WHAT *parent* but admires his children's *babble*,
 And sense and humour hears in *all* they *gabble* ?
 Between papa and company hemm'd in, 695
 How Dicky's *wit* provokes the *circling* grin !
 And if 'mongst all the *rattle* of a day,
 One *random repartee* thou'd break it's way,
 Which the child neither *means* nor *understands*,
 What *laughing plaudits* ! and what *clap of hands* ! 700
 How oft the table bids the *joke* resound !
 The *standing bye-word* of a *whole year round* !

Does he, in some mere, *wanton whimsy*, snatch
 The *pencil*, and around the wainscot *scratch*—

‘ What

- ‘ What *rising genius* dawns in *ev’ry stroke* ! 705
 ‘ *A painter born* !—See *here*—see *there* !—*Look, look* !
 ‘ Let him go on, and ‘gad ! ‘tis *all* so *well*,
 ‘ No artist *living* but he shall *excel*.
 ‘ Shou’d he proceed, and take to *Humour’s* school,
 ‘ To what he’ll be, your *Rowlandson’s* a *fool* ; 710
 ‘ Or if for *portraits*, soon shall *Romney* yield,
 ‘ And even *Gainsborough* give up the field :
 ‘ For *history* ? Still shall he top the *best* ;
 ‘ To *Reynolds’* force join all the *truth* of *West* !’

- OR does he draw the bow across the kit, 715
 And, *chance-directed*, some known passage hit,
 Enough ! ‘ The boy has a *surprizing* ear !
 ‘ Has he *not*, spouse ?’—‘ Indeed he *has*, my dear !
 ‘ What may we not expect from *such a son* ?’—
 ‘ At least a *Cramer*, or a *Salomon* ! 720
 ‘ A master he shall have, whate’er the *cost* ;
 ‘ A downright *sin* such *genius* shou’d be *lost* !’

PERHAPS

PERHAPS grown up, (his earlier years all spent
 In those vile tricks which speak a vicious bent
 In *nature* ; and by which we all foresee 725
 By what the *boy* is, what the *man* will be ;)
 Perhaps, tho' *mean* in *parts*, for trade too proud,
 (In *pride* as well as *cunning* 'bove the *crowd*)
 He bends to *study* ; and, thro' want of time,
 But *now* and *then* repeats a former crime : 730
 (While at his heart vice *still* retains it's *root*,
 And but retires more *vigorous* to shoot,
 When *rip'ning* years shall all it's strength display
Full-grown, nor *shrinking* from the eye of day)
 Perhaps, (for Dulness is to *Tail* allied, 735
 As *Craft* to Dulness, or as *both* to *Pride* ;)
 Perhaps he labours, and as fierce a zeal
 For *virtue*, as for *learning*, seems to feel :
 Ne'er from his *books*, but, plodding *day* and *night*, }
 (As wond'rous *good*, as he is wond'rous *bright*) } 740
 Makes his *dup'd* father think now all is right :

Who

Who, *simple* man! unknowing *Nature's* rules,
 And how she *qualifies* her *choicest* fools;
 Who not amongst the *brightest* wits himself,
Confounds with wits each *pert*, each *artful* elf; 745
 Sees *wisdom* in the *knave*, and *first-rate* parts,
 Where *wiser* men see only *meanest* arts;
 Finds *Genius* where but *Av'rice'* talons lurk,
 By *Knave'ry* sharp'ned for *Disbonour's* work—
 ——*Knave'ry!* which wise men hate, the dull adore, 750
 Comprizing *all the fool*, and *something more* :
 Vile, abject *Knave'ry!* ever on the watch
 For what by *meanest* methods he may catch;
 Whom he may best *surprize*, whose wit *defeat*,
 (For *none* so keen but whom a *knave* shall cheat) 755
 Whose *bonied* cell he safely shall deprive
 Of it's *best sweets*, and leave a *ruin'd* hive :
 Whose *loosen'd* nest shall offer to repair,
 And keep together with a *guardian* care ;
Friend-like, restore the *feathers* that are *flown*, 760
 While, *Lawyer-like*, he's *feathering* his own——

His father, *worse* than ign'rant *here*, nay even
 Deeming this Knav'ry *Genius*, thinking Heaven
 Has *blest* him with a son whose *sprightly* pranks
 Speak *brilliant talents*, and demand his *thanks*, 765
 For some *great, due return*, employs his *search*—
What ?—Dick shall be a—*pillar of the Church*.

HENCE, and from other causes *not more wise*,
 The place of *Wisdom* many a *knave* supplies :
 Hence groan the arts beneath an *over-stock*; 770
 Hence science feels the *weight* of many a *block* :
 Hence daily those are *taught* t'assume the *pallet*,
 Whose minds, *self-led*, had rose but to the *mallet*.
 Hence by themselves, *some politicians* made,
 Whom wiser Nature only meant for *trade* : 775
 Hence cowards by commissions rank with braves ;
 While *fools*, made *Lawyers*, think they rise to *Knaves* :
 Hence *authors*, with nor wit, nor sense, their *own* ;
Critics with brains of *lead*, and hearts of *stone* :

Hence

Hence Nature's *great decorum* is annoy'd, 780
 Hence half her *wisdom*, in *effect*, destroy'd :
 And, by admitting each *pretending fool*,
 Arts, arms, religion, turn'd to *ridicule* !

O FRIEND ! whose ear I have detain'd *too long* ;
 Whose judgment bids me *tremble* for my song ! 785
 You, at whose bar I have the Age arraign'd,
 (And, tho' in *rhime*, yet *feelingly* complain'd) }
 Say, am I right ? or is my subject feign'd ?
 Is *letter'd Dulness* still for *Dulness known* ?
 Is *Genius* rais'd to *Reputation's* throne ? 790
 Are *highest posts* to *wisest heads* assign'd,
 The *low* to talents of an *humbler kind* ?
 Are *blockheads* in their *native walks* content ?
 Is *Merit* cherish'd by *Encouragement* ?
 Say *this*, obedient I each word *retract*, 795
Renounce my sentiments, and yield to *fact*.—
 But if you think with *me*, with *me* confess,
 Folly but *more* herself in *Wisdom's dress* ;

'That

That *fools* in *fewest words* find best *disguise*,
 And, *wise in silence*, may seem *really wise*; 800
 But if, in spite of *Nature*, spite of *Fate*,
 They will be *busy*, and they will be *great*;
 Will *dare* to heights *beyond* their stretch of thought,
 Will *preach* and *teach* what first they shou'd be *taught*;
 If, lost to all the *little sense* they have, 805
 They will exhibit *more* than *Nature gave*;
 Will, *rushing* from their *sphere*, to heights arise,
 By *Reason* held as *Sacred to the Wise*;
 Then, joining *me*, convince the *erring elves*,
 The more they'd *raise*, the more they *sink* themselves; 810
 Yes—tell each *coxcomb*—tell him to his face,
 'The fool's *best knowledge* is to *know* his *place*!

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